

Message Text

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USIA-15 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-01 TRSE-00 XMB-04

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TAGS: MASS, PFOR, VS, EAID

SUBJECT: NBC INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT FORD

1. NBC CORRESPONDENTS JOHN CHANCELLOR
AND TOM BROKAW INTERVIEWED PRESIDENT FORD ON
NBC-TV EVENING OF JANUARY 23. TRANSCRIPT OF VIET-NAM
PORTION FOLLOWS:

2. BEGIN TEXT

MR. BROKAW: MR. PRESIDENT, WHAT IS YOUR OBJECTIVE IN
SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND VIET-NAM, PARTICULARLY.

THE PRESIDENT: IN VIET-NAM, AFTER ALL THE LIVES THAT
WERE LOST THERE, AMERICANS, OVER 50,000, AND AFTER THE
TREMENDOUS EXPENDITURES THAT WE MADE IN AMERICAN DOLLARS,
SEVERAL TIMES MORE THAN DOLS 30 BILLION A YEAR, IT SEEMS
TO ME THAT WE OUGHT TO TRY AND GIVE THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE
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THE OPPORTUNITY THROUGH MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO PROTECT

THEIR WAY OF LIFE.

THIS IS WHAT WE HAVE DONE TRADITIONALLY AS AMERICANS. CERTAINLY, SINCE THE END OF WORLD WAR II WE HAVE HELPED INNUMERABLE NATIONS IN MILITARY ARMS AND ECONOMIC

ASSISTANCE TO HELP THEMSELVES TO MAINTAIN THEIR OWN FREEDOM.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE BELIEVE, I THINK HISTORICALLY, THAT IF A COUNTRY AND A PEOPLE WANT TO PROTECT THEIR WAY OF LIFE AGAINST AGGRESSION, WE WILL HELP THEM IN A HUMANITARIAN WAY, AND IN A MILITARY WAY WITH ARMS AND FUNDS, IF THEY ARE WILLING TO FIGHT FOR THEMSELVES. THIS IS WITHIN OUR TRADITION AS AMERICANS.

THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE APPARENTLY DO WISH TO MAINTAIN THEIR NATIONAL INTEGRITY AND THEIR INDEPENDENCE. I THINK IT IS IN OUR BEST TRADITION AS AMERICANS TO HELP THEM AT THE PRESENT TIME.

MR. BROKAW: HOW MUCH LONGER AND HOW DEEP DOES OUR COMMITMENT GO TO THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE?

THE PRESIDENT: I DON'T THINK THAT THERE IS ANY LONG-TERM COMMITMENT. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR THERE, GRAHAM MARTIN, HAS TOLD ME, AS WELL AS DR. KISSINGER, THAT HE THINKS IF ADEQUATE DOLLARS WHICH ARE TRANSLATED INTO ARMS AND ECONOMIC AID -- IF THAT WAS MADE AVAILABLE THAT WITHIN TWO OR THREE YEARS THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE WOULD BE OVER THE HUMP MILITARILY AS WELL AS ECONOMICALLY.

I AM SURE WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT BEFORE, BUT THEY HAD MADE SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS UNTIL THEY BEGAN TO RUN A LITTLE SHORT OF AMMUNITION, UNTIL INFLATION STARTED IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS TO ACCELERATE.

I HAPPEN TO THINK THAT GRAHAM MARTIN, WHO IS A VERY HARDNOSED, VERY DEDICATED MAN AND VERY REALISTIC, IS UNCLASSIFIED

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RIGHT. I HOPE THE CONGRESS WILL GO ALONG WITH THIS EXTRA SUPPLEMENTAL THAT I AM ASKING FOR TO HELP THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PROTECT THEMSELVES.

MR. CHANCELLOR: SIR, THERE IS THAT DOLLARS 300 MILLION YOU HAVE ASKED FOR THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE, AND GIVEN WHAT YOU HAVE JUST SAID -- I AM GOING TO PHRASE IT THIS WAY -- WILL WE SEE THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE

TUNNEL IF WE GIVE THEM DOLS 300 MILLION? PARA THE
PRESIDENT: THE BEST ESTIMATE OF THE EXPERTS THAT ARE
OUT THERE, BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN, TELL ME THAT
DOLS 300 MILLION IN THIS FISCAL YEAR IS THE MINIMUM. A
YEAR AGO WHEN THE BUDGET WAS SUBMITTED FOR MILITARY

ASSISTANCE FOR SOUTH VIET-NAM, IT WAS DOLS 1 BILLION
400 MILLION. CONGRESS CUT IT IN HALF, WHICH MEANT
THAT SOUTH VIETNAMESE RANGERS GOING OUT ON PATROL
INSTEAD OF HAVING AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF HAND GRENADES
AND WEAPONS WERE CUT IN HALF, WICH, OF COURSE, HAS
UNDERCUT THEIR MILITARY CAPABILITY.

IT HAS MADE THEM CONSERVE AND NOT BE AS STRONG.

NOW, DOLS 300 MILLION DOESN'T TAKE THEM BACK UP TO WHERE
THEY WERE OR WHERE IT WAS PROPOSED THEY SHOULD BE. BUT
THE EXPERTS SAY, WHO ARE ON THE SCENE, WHO HAVE SEEN THE
FIGHTING AND HAVE LOOKED AT THE STOCKS AND THE RESERVES,
TELL ME THAT THAT WOULD BE ADEQUATE FOR THE CURRENT
CIRCUMSTANCES.

MR. CHANCELLOR: MR. PRESIDENT, DOES IT MAKE YOU UNEASY
TO SIT ON THAT COUCH IN THIS ROOM AND HAVE EXPERTS IN
VIET-NAM SAYING ONLY A LITTLE BIT MORE AND IT WILL BE
ALL RIGHT? WE DID HEAR THAT FOR SO MANY YEARS.

TE PRESIDENT: I THINK YOU HAVE TO THINK PRETTY HARD
ABOUT IT, BUT A LOT OF SKEPTICS, JOHN, SAID THAT THE
MONEY WE WERE GOING TO MAKE AVAILABLE FOR THE
REHABILITATION OF EUROPE AFTER WORLD WAR II WOULDN'T
DO ANY GOOD AND, OF COURSE, THE INVESTMENT WE MADE DID
PAY OFF.

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A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE SAID THE MONEY THAT WE MADE
AVAILABLE TO ISRAEL WOULDN'T BE HELPFUL IN BRINGING ABOUT
THE PEACE THAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED THERE FOR THE LAST
YEAR AND A HALF OR SO, BUT IT DID. IT HELPED.

I THINK AN INVESTMENT OF DOLS 300 MILLION AT THIS TIME
IN SOUTH VIET-NAM COULD VERY LIKELY BE A KEY FOR THE
PRESERVATION OF THEIR FREEDOM AND MIGHT CONCEIVABLY FORCE
THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TO STOP VIOLATING THE PARIS ACCORDS
OF JANUARY 1973.

WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE AGREEMENT THAT WAS SIGNED--AND I
HAPPENED TO BE THERE AT THE TIME OF THE SIGNING IN
JANUARY 1973--THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AGREED NOT TO

INFILTRATE. THE FACTS ARE THEY HAVE INFILTRATED WITH
COUNTLESS THOUSANDS -- I THINK CLOSE TO 100,000 FROM
NORTH VIET-NAM DOWN TO SOUTH VIET-NAM. THEY ARE
ATTACKING CITIES, METROPOLITAN AREAS.

THEY HAVE REFUSED TO PERMIT US TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT OUR

U.S. MISSING IN ACTION IN NORTH VIET-NAM. THEY HAVE
REFUSED TO NEGOTIATE ANY POLITICAL SETTLEMENT BETWEEN
NORTH VIET-NAM AND SOUTH VIET-NAM.

THEY HAVE CALLED OFF THE MEETINGS EITHER IN PARIS OR IN
SAIGON, SO HERE IS A COUNTRY -- SOUTH VIET-NAM --
THAT IS FACED WITH AN ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE
NORTH VIETNAMESE OF TOTAL DISREGARD OF THE AGREEMENT THAT
WAS SIGNED ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO. I THINK THE SOUTH
VIETNAMESE DESERVE SOME HELP IN THIS CRISIS. END TEXT.
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